Rifling through old files the edges of which stain one's fingers with soot, the residue of the very air of the place that everyone breathed and which at least a few wrote to complain about, one wonders at the sheer volume of material. Why? For whom? In most cases it was for a reader to do a reading.

Letters from Ward 13: Mainly Dementia Praecox

(Truth as Falsehood or Delusion)

Miss Adams was admitted twice before the "present" admission, suffering from aural hallucinations (hearing voices) and the "delusions" that food (candy her sister had given her) was poisoned. On her "Certificate" for 1905, Dr. Clarkson records, as "facts indicating insanity observed by myself," behavior that might have been a reaction to his examination: Miss Adams sat silently for 5 minutes, wringing her hands and holding her head, before she "brightened up & spoke freely." She seemed suspicious and looked behind the sofa. He records under "facts... communicated to me by others," more "insane behavior," that nonetheless might have been caused by anticipation of confinement. According to her sister Miss Adams had repeatedly told her that someone was coming to take her away, that she seemed to be terrified and suspicious of everyone, that she had ceased to play the piano although she had been fond of music, and that she peered under doors and tapped on walls. Much of this "insane" behaviour was a reasonable reaction to the truth.

After her admission Miss Adams is depicted suffering from a nameless dread, attributed to paranoia but quite possibly due to finding herself in the Asylum. She spends most of her time reading, doing fancy work, and practising music. Generally she is healthy and "takes an interest in her personal appearance, and in her surroundings," but sometimes she is "depressed and inclined to be suicidal." She accuses people of wearing her clothing, and watches for an opportunity to escape. The entry in the Clinical Record for May 25, 1909, describes her as disturbed and "dreading something" and recalls her sister's statement on Dr. Clarkson's "Certificate." She might have been dreading her move to the infirmary, which occurred on June 3, 1909. Such probabilities are never entertained, although other entries suggest that the atmosphere of the place would have been threatening enough without any specific danger. For example, that of April 12, 1909, casually records a violent